

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /066 W  
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R 221821Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BONN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0846  
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN  
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMCONSUL BREMEN  
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMCONSUL HAMBURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 13703

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, GW  
SUBJECT: BRANDT'S LETTER TO SCHMIDT ON NEO-NAZIS

REF: BONN 13629

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON AUGUST 18, GERMANY'S SOCIAL DEMO-  
CRATIC PARTY (SPD) RELEASED EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM  
PARTY CHAIRMAN BRANDT TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WARNING OF A  
CONTINUING DANGER FROM NEO-NAZIS AND URGING THE FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT TO TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS. THE GOVERNMENT  
SPOKESMAN THEREUPON RESPONDED THAT BRANDT'S CONCERNS  
WERE UNJUSTIFIED. BRANDT'S MOTIVES IN WRITING THE  
LETTER APPEAR LARGELY TACTICAL - TO BALANCE THE RECENT  
RECORD OF SPD PARTY DISCIPLINE AGAINST ITS LEFTIST  
ELEMENTS, AND TO "CATCH UP" WITH CRITICISM OF GERMAN  
RIGHTIST ACTIVITIES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. THE TIMING OF  
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RELEASE OF EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTER (WHICH WAS WRITTEN  
JULY 12) MAY BE INTENDED AS AN SPD EFFORT TO PROTECT THE  
PARTY FROM CRITICISM THAT MAY BE DIRECTED FROM ITALY AND  
ELSEWHERE AGAINST THE FRG IN CONNECTION WITH THE KAPPLER  
AFFAIR. END SUMMARY.

1. ON AUGUST 18, THE SPD-CONTROLLED "PARLIAMENTARY AND

POLITICAL PRESS SERVICE" (PPP) PUBLISHED EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM PARTY CHAIRMAN WILLY BRANDT TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. (THE FACT THAT THE LETTER WAS WRITTEN JULY 12 WAS NOT INDICATED.) BRANDT WROTE THAT THE SPD HAD BEEN RECEIVING INCREASING NUMBERS OF LETTERS COMPLAINING AGAINST MEETINGS OF RIGHT EXTREMISTS AT WHICH NAZI SYMPATHIES WERE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED, HOSTILE REMARKS WERE MADE ABOUT PARTICULAR SECTORS OF THE POPULATION, AND IN WHICH PEOPLE WERE INCITED TO BATTLE AGAINST THE FREE DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. BRANDT THEN NOTED THAT THE SUPPORTERS OF AND PARTICIPANTS IN SUCH ACTIVITIES REPRESENT A CLEAR MINORITY IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. THESE ACTIVITIES, HOWEVER, WORRY AND CONFUSE MANY CITIZENS WHEN THEY "TAKE PLACE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND APPROVAL OF THE PERTINENT ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES AND WHEN THOSE WHO PROTEST AGAINST SUCH INTRIGUES FIND THEMSELVES OBLIGED TO ACCEPT PROHIBITIONS ON THEIR OWN MEETINGS, AS WELL AS PERSECUTION." BRANDT FURTHER EXPRESSED THE SUSPICION THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS DEVOTE MUCH LESS ATTENTION TO THE DANGER FROM RIGHT EXTREMISTS AND NEO-NAZI GROUPS THAN TO ASSAULTS AGAINST GERMANY'S DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATIONS LAUNCHED BY EXTREMISTS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

2. ON AUGUST 19, THE FRG'S OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN CHARACTERIZED BRANDT'S CHARGES AS UNJUSTIFIED, SAYING THAT  
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EXTREMIST GROUPS WERE KEPT UNDER CAREFUL OBSERVATION. HE QUOTED FROM RECENT GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE EXTREME RIGHT IS A NEARLY INSIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN TODAY'S FRG, ADDING, HOWEVER, THAT THE INCREASINGLY MILITANT ACTIVITIES OF NEO-NAZI GROUPS MUST BE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS.

3. A SOURCE AT SPD HEADQUARTERS HAS GIVEN US THE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND. BRANDT'S LETTER WAS SENT AFTER INTERNAL SPD DISCUSSION WHICH NOTED SEVERAL UNFAVORABLE FACTORS. (1) THE SPD'S IMAGE IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN THAT OF OPPOSING EXTREME LEFTIST ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE EXPULSION OF FORMER YOUNG SOCIALIST (JUSO) PRESIDENT BENNETER FROM HIS POST AND FROM THE PARTY, AND SUBSEQUENT EFFORTS TO REMOVE HIS SYMPATHIZERS FROM PARTY MEMBERSHIP. FURTHER, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY HAVE FACED CRITICISM BECAUSE OF LOCAL EFFORTS TO PASS LEGISLATION PROHIBITING COMMUNIST PARTY (DKP) MEMBERS FROM HOLDING GOVERNMENT POSTS. (2) FOREIGN CRITICISM OF ALLEGED RIGHTIST ACTIVITIES IN GERMANY HAS INTENSIFIED, FOR EXAMPLE IN FRANCE AND ITALY. AT THE SAME TIME, NOTHING WAS BEING SAID ABOUT

THIS PROBLEM IN GERMANY. (3) GERMANY IS EXPERIENCING  
A "HITLER WAVE", INCLUDING A CONTROVERSIAL DOCUMENTARY  
FILM ABOUT HITLER AND GENERALLY HEIGHTENED INTEREST IN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 13703

THE THIRD REICH. AT THE SAME TIME, EXTREME RIGHTIST  
ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING MEETINGS OF PARAMILITARY-TYPE  
ASSOCIATIONS, APPEARED TO BE INCREASING. FOR THESE  
REASONS, THE SPD DECIDED IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO PUT THE  
PARTY ON RECORD AGAINST THE EXTREME RIGHT. ACCORDING  
TO OUR SOURCE, THE PUBLICATION OF EXCERPTS FROM BRANDT'S  
LETTER AT THE HEIGHT OF THE KAPPLER CONTROVERSY WAS PURE  
COINCIDENCE. AS A SIDELIGHT, OUR SOURCE MENTIONED  
THAT THERE WAS NOT A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF CONCERNED  
PUBLIC MAIL WARNING AGAINST RIGHTIST ACTIVITIES, AS  
SUGGESTED IN BRANDT'S LETTER, AND THAT THE DECISION TO  
WRITE SUCH A LETTER HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH CONSTITUENT  
MAIL.

4. COMMENT. WE FIND IT PLAUSIBLE THAT BRANDT'S LETTER

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WAS WRITTEN LARGELY FOR TACTICAL PARTY REASONS, TO COUNTER-BALANCE ANY RECENT IMAGE THE SPD MAY HAVE ACQUIRED AS "ANTI-LEFTIST," AND OUT OF SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM OF GERMAN RIGHTIST ACTIVITIES FROM ABROAD AND THE DESIRE NOT TO SEE THE SPD UPSTAGED OR OUTDISTANCED BY ITS SISTER PARTIES IN EUROPE. WE SPECULATE THAT PUBLICATION OF THE LETTER WAS IN FACT LINKED TO THE KAPPLER EPISODE, PROBABLY AS AN EFFORT TO KEEP THE PARTY'S HANDS CLEAN IN THIS MATTER. THE LETTER AND THE TIMING OF ITS PUBLICATION CERTAINLY DO NO FAVOR TO THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT, AND SERVE TO FUEL EMOTIONS IN EUROPE ALREADY SURROUNDING THE KAPPLER CASE (REFTEL). THIS PECULIAR EPISODE UNDERSCORES THE PERIODIC TENSIONS BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND THE SPD PARTY ORGANIZATION, OF WHICH SCHMIDT IS A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN BUT WHICH HE DOES NOT CONTROL.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 4  
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**Subject:** BRANDT'S LETTER TO SCHMIDT ON NEO-NAZIS  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009